

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 05332 01 OF 02 091636Z

51

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07

FRB-03 INR-07 NSAE-00 CIEP-01 SP-02 STR-04 TRSE-00

LAB-04 SIL-01 SAM-01 OMB-01 L-02 H-02 PA-01 PRS-01

USIA-06 SAJ-01 SS-15 NSC-05 /083 W

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R 091626Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0001

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

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AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, EGEN, UK, EEC

SUBJECT: EC MEMBERSHIP: PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE CONTINUES

REF: LONDON 5264

1. SUMMARY - SECOND DAY OF EC DEBATE IN COMMONS WAS NOT
ESPECIALLY NOTABLE. PRIME MINISTER WILSON CAME UNDER FIRE
FROM LABOR'S BACKBENCH ANTI-MARKETEERS, AND CONSERVATIVE
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PAGE 02 LONDON 05332 01 OF 02 091636Z

LEADER THATCHER MADE STRONG STATEMENT SUPPORTING GOVERN-

MENT'S PRO-EC MOTION. DISSIDENT INDUSTRY MINISTER HEFFER DID NOT CARRY OUT HIS THREAT TO RISK DISCIPLINARY ACTION BY SPEAKING AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT MOTION IN COMMONS, BUT REPORTEDLY REMAINS RESOLVED TO DO SO, DESPITE PRESSURES FROM GOVERNMENT AND SOME ANTI-MARKETEERS. ODDS THAT THIS CONFRONTATION CAN BE AVOIDED HAVE IMPROVED, BUT ARE STILL NOT VERY GOOD. ON UNION FRONT, GENERAL AND MUNICIPAL WORKERS DELAYED THEIR EXPECTED ANNOUNCEMENT ON EC. END SUMMARY.

2. COMMONS DEBATE ON EC MOVED THROUGH ITS SECOND DAY WITHOUT DRAMA. MOST SIGNIFICANT, BUT IN NEITHER CASE UNEXPECTED, ASPECTS OF DEBATE WERE BACKBENCH LABOR ATTACKS ON PRIME MINISTER DURING QUESTION PERIOD AND CONSERVATIVE LEADER MARGARET THATCHER'S FORCEFUL SPEECH ENDORSING CONTINUED MEMBERSHIP. ANTI-EC BACKBENCHERS RAKED WILSON OVER THE COALS ON CONDUCT GUIDELINES (REFTEL). HE DEFENDED RULES, POINTING OUT THEY WERE APPROVED BY ENTIRE CABINET WHICH "DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT IT WOULD BE TOLERABLE TO HAVE MINISTERS SPEAKING IN THE HOUSE CONTRARY TO SENSE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION". LABOR'S BACKBENCH PROCEDURAL EXPERT, MICHAEL ENGLISH, ALSO LODGED FORMAL COMPLAINT THAT WILSON'S GUIDELINES VIOLATED COMMONS RULES. SPEAKER WILL DECIDE THIS MATTER APRIL 9, BUT MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE THE COMPLAINT IS FRIVOLOUS. THATCHER'S STATEMENT AVOIDED PARTISANSHIP AND REMOVED ANY DOUBTS THAT SHE MIGHT BE LUKE-WARM PRO-MARKETEER (SEPTTEL). SHADOW CHANCELLOR GEOFFREY HOWE, HOWEVER, RIPPED OUT AT LABOR PARTY AND CRITICISED WILSON'S CONDUCT.

3. MOST SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT WAS NON-EVENT: DISSIDENT MINISTER ERIC HEFFER DID NOT CARRY OUT HIS CHALLENGE TO WILSON'S GUIDELINES. PRESS, HOWEVER, REPORTS HE PLANS TO SPEAK APRIL 9, DESPITE GROWING PRESSURE FROM GOVERNMENT AND FROM BACKBENCH ANTI-MARKETEERS TO REMAIN SILENT. LATTER REPORTEDLY BELIEVE HIS PROPOSED ACTION WILL PREJUDICE THEIR CAUSE AS WELL AS THE LABOR PARTY, AND BELIEVE HE IS BENT ON PERSONAL AGGRANDIZEMENT. EMPLOYMENT MINISTER FOOT, THE LEADING ANTI-MARKET CONCILIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 LONDON 05332 01 OF 02 091636Z

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PAGE 01 LONDON 05332 02 OF 02 091637Z

51

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LIATOR, IS SAID TO BE LEADING EFFORT KEEP HEFFER QUIET.

4. GOVERNMENT WHIP ADVISED EMBOFF THAT CABINET, IN PROLONGED AND CONTENTIOUS APRIL 8 MEETING, REAFFIRMED EARLIER DECISION NOT TO TRY TO FORCE GOVERNMENT MINISTERS TO SUPPORT GOVERNMENT IN APRIL 9 EC VOTE. ACCORDING TO PRESS, FONSEC CALLAGHAN LED FIGHT TO FORCE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 LONDON 05332 02 OF 02 091637Z

ISSUE WITH MINISTERS, BUT "FREE VOTE" FORCES LED BY
CHIEF WHIP BOB MELLISH (A RELUCTANT PRO-MARKETEER) PRE-
VAILED.

5. ON TRADE UNION FRONT, GENERAL AND MUNICIPAL WORKERS
UNION (GMWU), WHICH HAD BEEN EXPECTED TO ANNOUNCE ITS
SUPPORT FOR CONTINUED MEMBERSHIP, DECIDED TO POSTPONE
ITS DECISION ON THIS QUESTION (SEPTTEL).

6. COMMENT: EVENTS OF APRIL 8 DID NOTHING TO CHANGE
FUNDAMENTAL OUTLOOK WE HAVE REPORTED IN EARLIER CABLES.
HOWEVER, HEFFER'S FAILURE TO SPEAK IN COMMONS GAVE WILSON
ADDED BREATHING SPACE AND SEEMED TO INCREASE THE SLIM
PROSPECTS THAT FORMER CAN BE PERSUADED TO NOT PLAY THE
MARTYR. CABINET'S CONTINUED COHESION ON GUIDELINES AND
APPEARANCE OF SOME ANTI-MARKET OPPOSITION TO HEFFER ALSO
IMPROVES THE CHANCES THAT WILSON WOULD BE ABLE TO DIS-
CIPLINE HIM WITHOUT SERIOUS DAMAGE TO HIMSELF OR THE
GOVERNMENT. THE GMWU DECISION WAS A SETBACK, AT LEAST
IN SHORT TERM, FOR PRO-EC FORCES.

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